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ABSTRACT

The Native American Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI), funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, has departed from the assimilationist approach typical of past efforts to improve higher education for Native Americans. NAHEI supports Native American educational leaders' efforts to articulate their vision of higher education, strengthen their planning process, and identify major initiatives that facilitate strategic development. The goal is to increase the access and success of greater numbers of Native American students who will provide leadership in their communities, the nation, and the world by strengthening Native American communities and the higher education institutions that serve them. Phase 1 engaged 30 Native-controlled and mainstream higher education institutions in a planning process. Phase 2, now in progress, is funding 56 projects involving over 107 partners. Native-controlled institutions of higher education are becoming fiscally, academically, and administratively stable and strong. Four national Native organizations funded by NAHEI are building their capacities and becoming stronger and more visible advocates for addressing Native higher education needs at the federal, corporate, and foundation levels, as well as throughout the national mainstream of higher education. Partnerships formed with mainstream institutions of higher education are strengthening institutional curricula, augmenting degree programs, sustaining Native languages and culture, enhancing service delivery through new technologies, and building stronger local economies. Five successful fundraising efforts at individual institutions are described. (TD)

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Native American Higher Education Initiative

Educating the Mind and the Spirit

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The face of the 21st Century Native American is both old and new–a testament to the tenacity and vibrant creativity of indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. In so many ways, the rapidly increasing numbers of Native American college graduates today represent the convergence of past, present, and future. These Native graduates, particularly those from Native institutions of higher education, are prepared to lead and create change in their communities, as well as other locales throughout the world.

Just a half century ago, many young Native Americans would not have gone to college, let alone be proud of their cultural heritage and the knowledge therein. Today, however, there is hope for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians who want to pursue a higher education, as a renaissance is occurring in higher education and tremendous changes are resulting. The Foundation has played a key role in advancing this movement and developing the next generation of leaders, academically prepared, civic-minded, and culturally grounded in their identity.

This includes student leaders like Assiniboine student, Jodi Magnan, who hopes to use a business degree to raise buffalo on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, where unemployment is 30 percent. A tribal college program, funded by the Kellogg Foundation, focuses on buffalo, which — although once nearly extinct—are both an economic and spiritual resource for Plains tribes. "I'm going to college to learn to raise buffalo", said Magnan, a 24-year-old mother of three, "so we can get back to the old way of eating healthy and find new ways to develop the growing bison industry for the benefit of reservation communities." A partnership of ten tribal colleges and nineteen tribes involved in the Northern Plains Bison Education Project are developing curricula that include courses such as range management, prairie ecology, animal science, and conservation of habitat, all with a cultural foundation. These colleges are integrating a Western science model with an indigenous model, resulting in a whole new body of knowledge that graduates are applying.

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

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THE STORY

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is founded on a belief that education offers the greatest opportunity for improving one generation over another. For many people, education, especially higher education has been the route to an improved quality of life. Yet for many Native Americans, it has been a futile path.

Historically, education for Native Americans has been largely government controlled, fragmented, inadequately funded, and fraught with low expectations and neglect. In 1992, alarming statistics indicated that only 52 percent of Native Americans finished high school, 17 percent attended college, 4 percent graduated from four-year institutions, 2 percent attended graduate school, and less than 1 percent completed graduate school, all statistics far below national averages.

In the past, a number of foundation and government programs aimed at improving higher education for Native Americans have, for the most part, been aimed at assimilating Native Americans into the American mainstream and promoting dependency. These "solutions," imposed on communities, have often been poorly developed or were short-term remedial approaches. In the process, many of these programs and policies destroyed cultures and the identity of a people.

The Native American Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI) took a departure from these approaches by supporting Native American educational leaders' efforts to articulate their vision of higher education, strengthen their planning process, and identify major initiatives that facilitate strategic development. The Native American Higher Education Initiative began in 1995 with a goal of catalyzing significant, positive changes in higher education in the United States. The goal was to increase the access and success of greater numbers of Native American students who will provide leadership in their communities, the nation, and the world by strengthening Native American communities and the higher education institutions that serve them.

Today, NAHEI targets more than 30 Native institutions of higher education that are not only meeting the unique needs of Native American students mostly living on reservations and in rural areas, but they are also meeting the needs of the increasing number of rural-based non-Native students. These institutions are also preserving cultural traditions, and developing programs and resources needed to address the poverty present on Indian reservations. In fact, together, the Native-controlled colleges represent the most significant and successful development in Native American educational history. Their unique blend of quality education with Native American culture and values promotes achievement among students who may never have known educational success, but who are now emerging as leaders, cultural intermediaries, and changemakers.

Assistance is also being provided to a number of mainstream institutions that are strengthening results-oriented partnerships, technical assistance to tribal colleges, and the dissemination of research and information. The Foundation-funded efforts support students by improving greater access to higher education, strengthening academic achievement, and helping increase graduation rates by developing quality learning environments. A major focus is on educating graduates who are grounded in their own culture, yet are prepared with the social, civic, and work skills they need to live and contribute to a multicultural, global society.

Phase I of NAHEI was initiated in 1995 and engaged 30 Native-controlled higher education institutions and mainstream higher education institutional partners across the country in a planning process. Phase II of NAHEI began in 1997 and will continue to 2003, strengthening selected Native higher education institutions and mainstream partners to implement programming, and enhance networking, capacity building, evaluation, dissemination, and policy development necessary to serve greater numbers of Native American students and communities effectively throughout the 21st Century.

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FACTS

Native American Higher Education Initiative

Program Area:
Youth and Education

Geographic scope:
United States

Began:
October 1995

End:
September 2003

Total WKKF Investment:

$23,379,858

($19,582,576 has been funded to date.)

Now in its implementation phase, NAHEI is focused on four major strategies:

- Institutional/program development and capacity building of Native institutions of higher education
- Capacity building of the national organizations focused on Native higher education
- Academic and thematic collaborations/partnerships focused on:
  - Culture and language preservation
  - Land and natural resources preservation
  - Social and economic community development
  - Inter-institutional access and success
- Support strategies, including networking conferences, technical assistance, cluster evaluation, intermediary management, communications, connections to national and international educational arenas, and policy impact

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

During Phase I (1995-1997), the initiative intended to:

- Help create a shared vision among tribal colleges and mainstream institutions about how they separately and collectively increase access and academic success for Native students
- Increase capacity at the national level, through the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education, the American Indian College Fund and the AIHEC Student Congress, for program development, sustainability, and policy impact
- Create coalitions among tribal colleges and mainstream institutions to address student needs
- Strengthen the capacity of tribal colleges to use the land-grant mission to serve students and their communities

Now in Phase II (1997-2002), there are 56 projects involving over 107 partners that are implementing the shared vision that was developed in Phase I. Participants include Native institutions of higher education, mainly based in remote rural areas on Indian reservations, three urban-based institutions, one private college, and two owned and operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; one Congressionally chartered multi-tribal institution in the Southwest; and one consortium of Alaska Native villages in the Arctic Circle near Barrow, the northernmost point in Alaska. Other grantees/partners include mainstream institutions of higher education that serve high numbers of Native American students in California, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kansas, Washington, Montana, Oregon, North Dakota, South Dakota, Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii. Each of these institutions partnered with Native institutions of higher education or other Native organizations to effect systems change. Finally, four national organizations and one state organization with experience in advancing Native higher education were funded.

In the second year of the implementation of Phase II of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's *Native American Higher Education Initiative* (NAHEI), Native-controlled institutions of higher education continue to capture their mutual dream of becoming fiscally, academically and administratively stable and strong.

The four national Native organizations funded by NAHEI, specifically chartered to assist Native higher education, are building their capacities and becoming stronger and more visible advocates for addressing Native higher education needs at the federal, corporate, and foundation levels, as well as throughout the national mainstream of higher education.

Additionally, many of these institutions have built strong partnerships both with mainstream and other Native institutions of higher education for the purpose of strengthening institutional curricula, augmenting degree programs, sustaining Native languages and culture, enhancing service delivery through new technologies, and

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developing Native institutions for building stronger local economies that are socially and culturally responsible.

In 1992, Federal legislation designated tribal colleges as land-grant institutions. This relatively new designation, complemented by NAHEI, is beginning to assist them in achieving greater visibility and connectedness to mainstream higher education as well as securing additional resources for operations and academic enhancements.

DISSEMINATION

Since the beginning of NAHEI, there has been remarkable media coverage on the initiative, individual projects, and the tribal college movement in general. Major articles have appeared in the *New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, Albuquerque Journal,* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligence,* to name a few. There has also been significant radio and television coverage including the *McNeil Lehrer Hour* and *ABC Evening News,* resulting in increased visibility of tribal colleges by the general public, funders, policymakers, and other educators.

Numerous foundations have been referred to WKKF by other foundations and by Native leaders themselves requesting information and technical assistance on building relationships with Native communities and institutions, and on funding efforts to address Native social and educational issues, including the Lilly Endowment, The David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Given the need to share the richness and breadth of lessons learned, there are plans to produce concrete methods of dissemination that will bridge the tribal colleges, tribal communities to mainstream regional, national, and international educational arenas. To be of value to multiple educational audiences, information will be communicated in different forms (for example, statistical reports, historical accounts, case studies, and pragmatic presentations) and through a variety of sources (for example, professional journals, conferences, books, and monograph publications).

SUSTAINABILITY

To date, WKKF efforts have generated more than $60 million in additional support for tribal colleges from foundations across the country, such as the Packard Foundation ($12.5 million), the Lilly Endowment ($30 million), and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation ($500,000). In addition to these resources, students at tribal colleges will command a share of the $1 billion designated by the Gates Foundation for the Millennium Scholars, new teachers will benefit from training programs through a Phillip Morris partnership focused on teacher education; and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium Cultural Learning Centers project has secured new backing from the Log Homes Council of America and numerous corporate donors.

Policy efforts, such as the Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities, signed in 1998 have also led to emerging funding opportunities with various federal agencies. To a large extent, the enthusiasm engendered by NAHEI has resulted in unanticipated financial outcomes that will help to provide a foundation of support for the colleges for years to come. The initiative's planned efforts to foster sustainability through the creation of development programs at 10 tribal colleges have also generated additional resources through emerging efforts to develop and institutionalize fundraising systems.

The success of NAHEI-supported fundraising efforts at individual institutional levels thus far has varied, although comprehensive figures for all efforts are not yet available. A few examples of NAHEI-supported fundraising efforts that have been particularly positive are:

- By leveraging its $100,000 Kellogg grant, Oglala Lakota College has raised over $1.3 million. This in turn was used to obtain an additional $650,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation. As a result, Oglala Lakota College is two years ahead of schedule on its 10-year capital campaign to build a new library and new college centers at each of its ten community sites. For this college, this represents a 1300 percent return to date on the Kellogg Foundation's investment under the Strategy 1 Institutional Development and Capacity Building grant.
- Bay Mills Community College in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan used its NAHEI funding to establish an institutional Development Office, which, in its first year alone, raised $350,000, exceeding its first-year fund-raising goal of $50,000 by six-fold; furthermore, an additional $210,000 was raised in the second year, for a total of $560,000 in two years – this amounts to a 560 percent return *to date* on the Kellogg

Foundation's investment for that college's Strategy 1 Institutional Development and Capacity Building grant.

- Funded by the Kellogg Foundation to launch a major campaign, "Sii Ha Sin" (the Navajo word for "hope") the American Indian College Fund has already raised $50 million mid-way through its second year of NAHEI funding – this constitutes a 1,000 percent return to date on the Kellogg Foundation's investment, and that represents just one of four Native organizations participating in the Strategy 2 Capacity Building of National Organizations program.

Other efforts to sustain the changes initiated by NAHEI include:

- By the end of the 2000-2001 academic year, four new teacher education programs at Native Higher Education Institutions will have graduated approximately 80 new elementary level Native teachers including Dine College, Leech Lake College, Ilisagvik College, Northwest Indian College and Turtle Mountain Community College. Based on current enrollments in these programs, it is anticipated that within the following two years, at least an additional 90 to 100 more Native teachers will be working in classrooms with Native students. Current graduates are being heavily recruited, and a long-term impact is that these new teachers, who have studied pedagogy and cultural learning styles, may be teaching youth for the next 30-50 years.
- A new master's degree program now exists at Oglala Lakota College. The new degree program is already training Native principals and counselors for reservation schools. Thirty-three students are currently taking coursework to complete their Master's degrees in this new program, 26 with an Educational Administration emphasis, and seven with a Human Resources emphasis.

In the future, when initiative and individual project activities have been completed, the challenge will be to maintain the momentum that NAHEI Phase II funds have set in motion. Real transformation takes time and many of the grantees believe that their short-term gains are also signaling to leaders that greater challenges lie ahead.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Information and Technology Systems: NAHEI's contribution to enhancing the *technological* capacities of Native institutions of higher education has been significant. All tribal colleges can now access Internet, for example. While many infrastructure and connectivity problems persist, huge inroads have occurred over the past two years. Many Native institutions are now able to offer distance learning options to their students (both in-class and via Internet), thereby not only increasing academic options for students and in many cases student retention, but also increasing overall enrollments by 50 percent since the initiative began and as the breadth of educational opportunities enlarges. Also in partnership with the University of Michigan Alliance for Community Technology, tribal colleges are now in the process of developing virtual libraries.

Capitalizing on Diversity: Tribal colleges have increased efforts to work together with other diverse higher education institutions, particularly Historically Black Colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions, to help shape national agendas and collaborate for the common good. For example, these three groups of institutions joined forces for the first time by forming the Alliance for Equity in Education for the purpose of informing policymakers about common concerns.

Social and Economic Community Development: The Center for New Growth and Economic Development at Turtle Mountain College is helping the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe sustain tribal economic and social competitiveness through ventures other than gaming by assisting in the formulation of business plans, developing tribal codes/ordinances, and assessing the training needs of local employees. They are also helping individuals promote small business development.

Leadership: The AIHEC Student Congress has implemented a leadership plan to reach out to all students enrolled at the tribal colleges and universities, and to encourage development of student leader councils at each institution. They have also initiated efforts to connect with other indigenous student leaders throughout the world.

LESSONS LEARNED

While successful in many respects, the initiative has not always progressed smoothly. Bridging cultures has presented many challenges. Understanding does not mean agreement. It requires trust building, time, patience, cross-cultural communication, technical assistance, and capacity building. We found that when cultures are brought together (i.e., tribal colleges and mainstream institutions; and the Foundation and Native Americans) to seek a common goal, it does not mean that each side will approach seeking that goal in the same way. In the networking meetings for example, the Foundation learned to be flexible in organizational practices and as a result, there was a strong Native cultural emphasis on ceremony, integration of spirituality, storytelling, differing orientations to time, and a deep respect for the wisdom of elders. By respecting these ways rather than imposing a more corporate approach to conducting business, both sides benefited.

As a whole, NAHEI has supported the development and growth of centers of excellence, centers of "new" thinking about learning and teaching, of modeling other Native forms of educational leadership, of integrating cultural-based symbols as foundations for learning and organizational development, and of constructing new systems of post-secondary learning.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Native American Higher Education Initiative has come quite a distance — from an idea to substantial reality. In some ways it might be said that NAHEI reflects the very best of the missions of each of the NAHEI stakeholders — WKKF, the tribal colleges/universities, collaborating mainstream institutions of higher education, and several national Native American organizations. A careful reading of the mission statements of these stakeholders makes it clear that each has committed itself to improve the quality of life for people as well as to enhance peoples' abilities to help themselves and their communities.

NAHEI is a shared vision of its stakeholders. This shared vision has the potential to change how Native people and non-Native people view the education process and outcomes within both Native and non-Native institutions of higher education of the United States. This shared vision also encompasses how higher education for Native Americans can play a role in changing and benefiting Native communities throughout the nation.

It is important to keep in mind that despite all the resources Kellogg and its fellow stakeholders have committed to NAHEI, it is, in fact, only one initiative. NAHEI is not meant to be the total solution for addressing the many concerns identified as needing improvement within the spectrum of higher education. With this initiative, however, the Kellogg Foundation's resources have provided substantial encouragement and support to the already innovative and successful tribal college movement. In addition, it has contributed to strengthening four national Native American organizations, and has stimulated mainstream institutions of higher education to be more open to partnerships and more proactive in creating environments conducive to Native American student success.

As a recent report from the cluster evaluators summarizes:

"One of the most outstanding qualities of Tribal Colleges/Universities is their fundamental characteristic to engage — i.e., serve and energize — their respective communities, and to address community needs and community-defined problems. In this respect, they are exemplars of engaged institutions and represent a good template for non-Native institutions of higher education to emulate in response to the Kellogg-funded commission report on Engaged Institutions. That report notes that state universities and land-grant colleges need to better engage communities in programs targeted to serve the good of the public. TCUs are already demonstrating that higher education institutions can truly be "centers of learning for their communities."

"Some will say that the 'Capturing the Dream' Native American Higher Education Initiative was a success from the time it was passed by the Board of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Board's recognition that an initiative implemented to enhance the success of Native Americans in higher education must be tightly focused on an agenda designed and managed by Native Americans is a first. It is a first not only in the philanthropic world, but in all sectors responsible for Native American participation in the world of higher education. The choice by Kellogg's Board to support this initiative has led to innovative thinking and accomplishments on the part of all the stakeholders, most importantly, the students."

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THE STORY

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